

Message Text

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SUBJ: DAVIS ANNOUNCES MAJOR CABINET RESHUFFLE

SUMMARY - ONTARIO PREMIER DAVIS ANNOUNCED A MAJOR
CABINET RESHUFFLE AUG. 18 FOLLOWING RECENT RESIGNATION
OF TREASURER AND CABINET STRONGMAN DARCY MCKEOUGH.
POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE MOVE ARE LIKELY TO BE
MINIMAL AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN.
END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING THE RECENT RESIGNATION OF TREASURER
DARCY MCKEOUGH AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY MINISTER OF
NATURAL RESOURCES FRANK MILLER, ONTARIO PREMIER
WILLIAM DAVIS ANNOUNCED ADDITIONAL CABINET
CHANGES TODAY WHICH AMOUNT TO A MAJOR
RESHUFFLE OF HIS GOVERNMENT. ROBERT WELCH, DEPUTY
PREMIER AND GOVERNMENT LEADER IN THE HOUSE RETAINS THOSE
POSTS WHILE SHIFTING FROM CULTURE AND RECREATION
MINISTRY TO BECOME SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE. FORMER LABOR
MINISTER BETTE STEPHENSON TAKES OVER A MERGED MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION AND MINISTRY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
AND THOMAS WELLS VACATES EDUCATION TO TAKE ON INTER-
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GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, A PORTFOLIO WHICH MCKEOUGH HAD
PREVIOUSLY HELD ALONG WITH TREASURY. GEORGE KERR, FORMERLY
SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL REMAINS IN LATTER POST.

2. TWO MINISTERS WHOSE PERFORMANCES HAVE DRAWN CON-
SIDERABLE CRITICISM WERE ALSO MOVED. ENERGY MINISTER
REUBEN BAETZ WAS SHIFTED TO PRESUMABLY QUIETER POST

OF RECREATION AND CULTURE. GEORGE MCCAGUE, WHO HAS DRAWN HEAVY FIRE FROM PRESS AND OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES FOR "BACKING DOWN" ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES (MOST RECENTLY FOR GIVING A FOUR YEAR EXTENSION TO INCO CO. TO COMPLY WITH POLLUTION CONTROL ORDER AT ITS GIANT SUDBURY NICKEL SMELTER) MOVES TO RELATIVE OBSCURITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD WHILE THAT INCUMBENT, LONG-TIME CABINET MEMBER JAMES AULD, TAKES OVER MINISTRIES OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY. REPLACING MCCAGUE AT ENVIRONMENT WILL BE HARRY PARROT, FORMERLY MIN. OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES. ONLY NEWCOMER TO CABINET IS ROBERT ELGIE, A LAWYER AND DOCTOR REPRESENTING THE METRO CONSTITUENCY OF YORK EAST WHO REPLACES STEPHENSON IN LABOR MINISTRY.

3. COMMENT - WHILE A SENIOR AIDE IN PREMIER'S OFFICE TOLD CONSUL GENERAL SOMEWHAT HYPERBOLICALLY THAT "THIS IS A CABINET TO ENSURE CONTINUANCE OF DAVIS GOVERNMENT FOR NEXT 20 YEARS," INITIAL CONSENSUS AMONG POLITICAL OBSERVERS HERE IS THAT POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE MOVE LIKELY TO BE MINIMAL. RESHUFFLE DOES PROVIDE GOVERNMENT WITH SOME ADDED FLEXIBILITY IN NEXT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION IN DEALING WITH CONTENTIOUS ISSUES, PARTICULARLY POLLUTION CONTROL AND PROPOSED LEGISLATION IN FIELD OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY, WHERE NEW MINISTERS WILL MORE EASILY BE

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ABLE TO ALTER OLD POLICIES. HOWEVER, POLITICAL BALANCE OF POWER IN ONTARIO UNLIKELY TO BE MATERIALLY ALTERED AT LEAST IN SHORT RUN.

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